

Bourton Combe Bouldering

Bourton Combe is a small, solid and compact limestone crag, situated in a peaceful wooded valley near the village of Flax Bourton. It is located just off the A370, and about five miles out of Bristol. Approaching from Bristol enter the village and turn left up the narrow Bourton Combe road. Park sensibly after 300 metres. Follow the big track rightwards into the wood then take the second of two obvious tracks leading leftwards. The crag is 400 meters further on, up and left above a small scree slope. The approach should take ten minutes.

The bouldering on the crag is in three sections. The left wall is vertical with a low overhang on the right, and with a flat jug in the centre at chest height. After the first groove is a bulging wall with a prominent flat jug on the right, again at chest height. After the second groove is a vertical wall with a square cut groove to its right. The crag continues rightwards but the bouldering is concentrated in the first three sections. Mat recommended for the highballs. The problems are described from left to right.

1. The full BC traverse 7a+ **

The traverse follows an obvious line using everything available up to about eight feet. Start on blocks at the extreme left of the crag and follow the line of least resistance to a step on to the block on the right. Fully 30 moves and it gets a bit pumpy.

2. The BC Half traverse 7a **

It is arguably better to miss out the first section of the BC traverse and start at the flat jug on the vertical wall (this section is called Before BC) as the problem flows more smoothly.

3. End of it all S/S 6a+

Sit start below the flat jug. Move up to this and use it to gain a sloping undercut above. From here stretch to further undercuts and move right to a slightly hollow sounding square finishing hold.

4. Clockwork orange 6a *

Sit start a metre right of End of it all. Follow the orange streak using side pull pinches out right to gain the square jug directly.

5. The AD traverse 7b **

This follows a low powerful low line from a sitter below the jug on End of it All to the block finish of the BC traverse. Make powerful sideways progress utilising the jug and a selection of big sidepulls and spans to a hard move across the groove using a square pocket. From here stay low to reach a flat jug. (only use holds level with or below the two flat jugs) Finish more easily along the BC traverse.

6. The DA reverse 7b **

Start from a sitter below the second flat jug. Reverse the AD traverse in similar vein but using a slightly different sequence, with a big move back to the first jug. Finish by reversing Before BC to step on to the blocks on the far left.

7. Gone for a Bourton 6b+ **

This delicate and technical problem provides the meat of a 7a sport route of the same name up the left hand groove. Finish at an incut in the groove at about 15 feet. The sit start is hard 6c.

8. The AD Bourton link 7b ***

Along the low AD traverse and up Gone for a Burton. The best problem at the crag?

9. Bourton Direct 7a *

Highball. From a sitter, climb the bulging wall direct using pinches, layaways and cunning footwork. Finish with a tricky move to get the slanting finger jug next to the bolt at 15 feet. Avoid holds in the left groove, and any holds to the right of and including the flat jug on the right. 6C+ from standing. An easier finish uses the high pinch on Soloist.

10. Soloist 6a

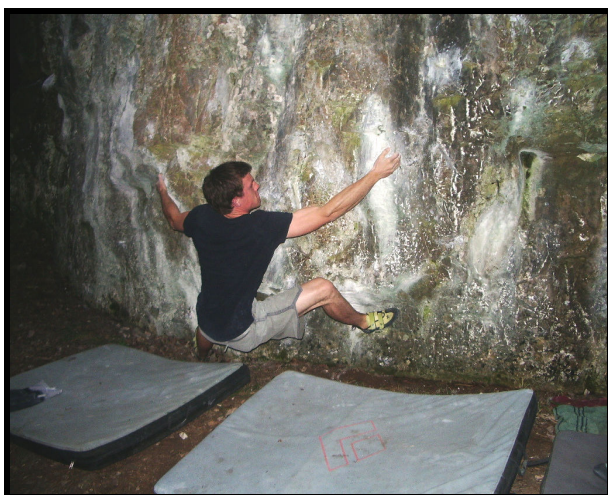
Sit start the sport route of the same name up the left side of the second groove to the obvious pinch hold on the left at 15 feet.

11. Cut Throat 6b *

Make fingery moves direct to the jug next to the second bolt on the route Cut Throat. Stay out of the shallow groove to the right. An awkward sitter is 6c.

12. Flax Factor 6a

Climb the third groove to a long horizontal pocket at 15 feet.



Matt setting up for the crux cross through on the AD traverse (7b)

(Dan Savory June 2008)

